

# LET'S GET PHYSICAL

*As a new year begins, gyms fill up with resolutions determined to make this the year they finally win the battle of the bulge. But for Okies tired of the same old treadmill-elliptical-weights slog toward fitness, these unusual classes, sports, boot camps, and martial arts will raise the heart rate, build strength, and take off those extra holiday pounds in ways that are fun, useful, and sometimes even strange.*

By SUSAN DRAGOO  
Photography by LORI DUCKWORTH

Hali Dawson, owner of XoloLife in Broken Arrow, teaches her students to twist and twirl their way to fitness on aerial silks.

OklahomatoToday.com



*“The sport requires STRENGTH IN THE QUADS, core strength, and arm strength.”*

## GOOD FENCES

**E**N *CARDE!*

There’s a thrill, and a hint of dread, to hearing those words; an expectation that something is about to happen. The muscles tense, and with blade in hand and body prepared to spring, it’s easy to picture Errol Flynn in a swashbuckling film role. But the setting is neither pirate ship nor medieval castle, and when the director shouts, “Fence,” opponents advance toward each other along a piste, or fencing strip, about four feet wide and forty-four feet long.

At Oklahoma City’s Redlands Fencing Center, owners Shelll and David Ribaud and their staff teach three styles of Olympic fencing. Using a downward motion, a sabreist scores against opponents with any part of the blade. Foil fencers use a lighter, more flexible blade, and the chest is the target. As with foil, epee fencers score with the tip of the blade, but any body part is fair game, much like in an actual duel.

“Sabre is the modern version of a cavalry sword,” says Shelll. “I personally like epee best, because it comes out of the original, dueling first-blood sport. Obviously, we don’t do that any more.”

Redlands has classes for all ages and levels—their youngest student is seven, and their oldest is eighty-two—including a free introductory class in which students learn about gear and safety rules and try fencing with individual instruction. Fencing apparel protects the arms and torso, with additional shielding for the chest plus a fencing mask.

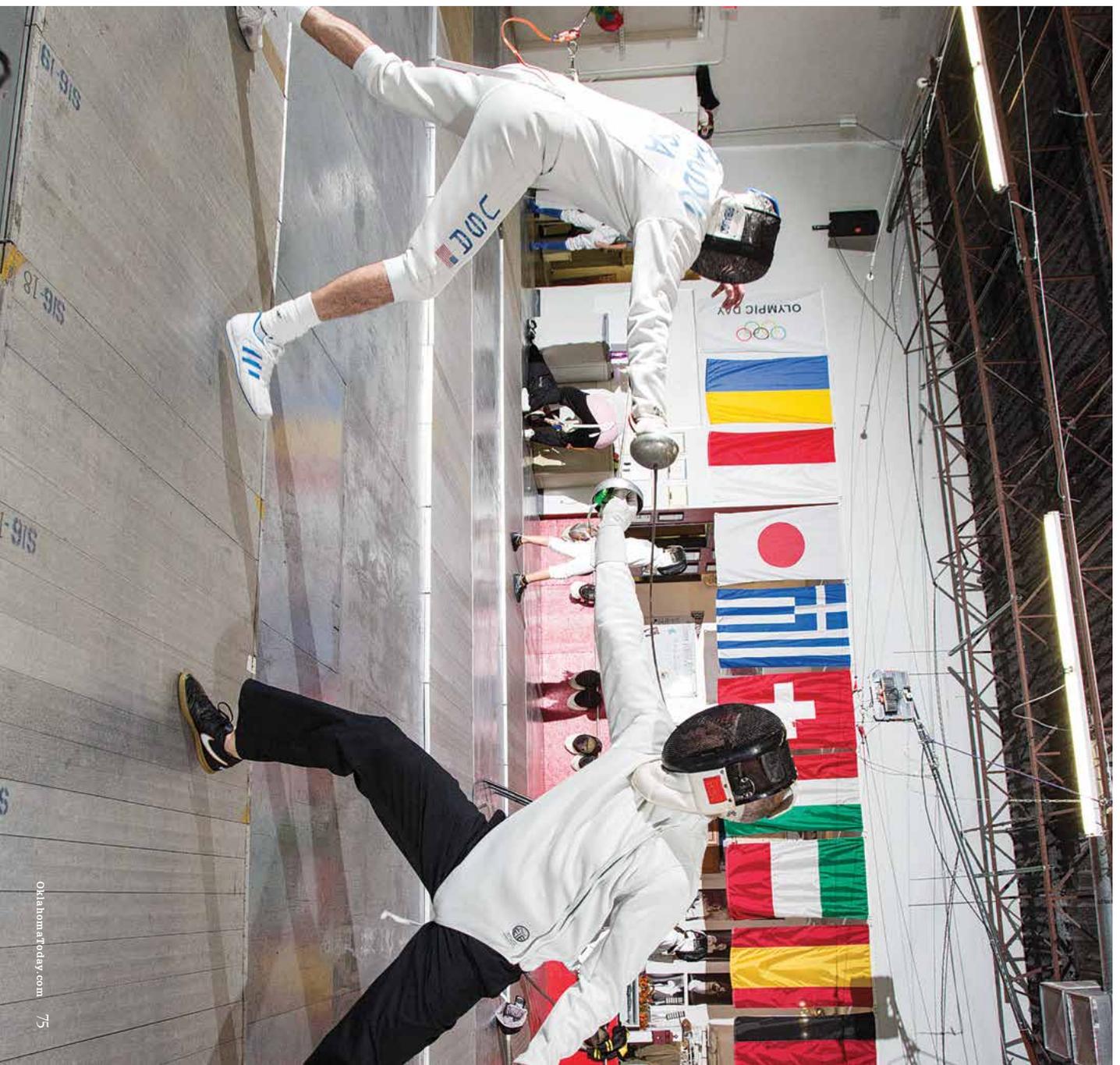
Once a bout begins, fencers look for any body part their opponent leaves open for a touch, which is contact made by a pressure-sensitive button on the end of the blade. But the blades are not actually sharp objects, and they will draw no blood. When one opponent presses the button against another’s body, the electronic scoring system to which it is wired indicates points, while the fencers advance and retreat, advance and retreat, parrying and thrusting.

All this advancing, retreating, thrusting, parrying—not to mention the occasional lunge—make for an intense workout. Both the Ribauds are competitive fencers, and Shelll says she has given up the gym in favor of fencing-specific drills such as bilateral lunges. The sport requires strength in the quads for lunges and to maintain proper foot position; core strength to sustain an erect body position; and arm strength for holding the blade, parrying, and thrusting. In a bout, there are only seconds of rest between bursts of activity, keeping the heart rate elevated.

It’s a rare experience: a work-out that you may not want to end. At least not until you’ve vanquished your opponent and swashbuckled off into the sunset.

Classes at Redlands Fencing Center are \$85 per month, 6909 West Hefner Road in Oklahoma City, (405) 474-7030 or [redlandsfencing.com](http://redlandsfencing.com).

**Redlands Fencing Center in Oklahoma City recommends students attend classes two to four times a week to maximize their skills with an epee.**





## MIGHT AS WELL JUMP

**BOOT CAMP-STYLE WORK-**OUTS are high-intensity classes involving interval training and a variety of exercises, and the operative word is “intensity.” But add trampolines to the equation, and fun becomes the key factor.

“It’s like being a kid again,” says Kelsey Alonzo of Piedmont, a regular at the Trampoline Boot Camps offered by OneHealthyBod Fitness at Edmond’s Elevation Trampoline Park. For Alonzo, who has lost a

hundred pounds in the past ten months, it adds a sense of play to her workout routine.

“It’s high intensity,” she says. “It doesn’t seem like it is while you’re doing it, but it is.”

Steve Clausen, owner and personal trainer at OneHealthyBod, conducts the boot camps, which have been going since the trampoline park opened eight years ago and offer a low-impact, full-body workout.

“It’s a great activity for increasing fitness without pounding your spine,” says Clausen.

Another key benefit is stabilization of secondary muscles.

“When you’re on a solid surface, you don’t need those secondary muscles as much to balance,” says Clausen. “On a trampoline, you have to use them to stabilize yourself. That’s important for preserving long-term mobility.”

A trampoline boot camp starts with a warm-up on the huge main court at Elevation. Running and bouncing across the court and doing flips raises the heart rate and limbers up the muscles. Next, boot campers jump with reckless abandon into a pit filled

with big pieces of foam. Then, the group moves to the dodgeball court for some competition.

“We may have as many as forty people at a trampoline boot camp, and when they’re on the dodgeball court, it can get pretty aggressive,” says Clausen.

After winding down with push-ups, sit-ups, and a few burpees back on the main court, class members have free time to return to the foam pit, dodgeball, or spend more time working out on the main court. Clausen’s goal is to keep people moving and make it fun. He holds

trampoline boot camps about four times a year. He’s held them in parks, in water, and even in a bounce house.

“They get people moving, laughing, falling down, and getting up,” says Clausen. “The main thing is that people are moving, and they’re having fun.”

**OneHealthyBod conducts trampoline boot camps four times a year, but there’s always a bouncy workout to be had at Elevation Trampoline Park in Edmond and Moore.**



Elevation Trampoline Park has locations in Edmond and Moore, 14402 North Lincoln Boulevard in Edmond, (405) 463-3335, 1431 North Moore Avenue in Moore, (405) 759-2288, elevationtp.com, OneHealthyBod Fitness, (405) 492-6429 or onehealthybod.com.



*“Being challenged with fear lowers their anxiety. IT’S FUNNY HOW BEING twenty feet in the air helps you prioritize what is actually important.”*

## FLIGHT OF FITNESS

BY REATHAKING

**B**PERFORMANCES BY aerial silks artists look magical—think Cirque du Soleil—but learning to fly like a modern-day acrobat doesn’t mean running away with the circus. In fact, those looking to strengthen their core and upper body—or even manage a chronic condition—may find that silk-powered flight is the workout they’ve been looking for, which is why eclectic crowds are drawn to aerial silks classes like those at XplorLife in Broken Arrow.

“I expected a lot of gymnasts, dancers, and athletes, but most of my students are not athletes at all,” says owner Hali Dawson. “They didn’t grow up in the gym testing their body’s limits. This sport is for anyone who chooses to be active. It’s what you make it.”

Both the physical and mental dimensions of the sport appeal to student Selema Hinton.

“I love climbing above the world’s problems and constraints,” she says. “I love knowing I can overcome difficulties like gravity and fly like a bird. Here, the impossible is possible.”

Almost half of Dawson’s students have scoliosis. One of them, Alexia Clark, says it’s a fun way to help stabilize her back, build the surrounding muscles, and decrease

In addition to building core strength, regular workouts on aerial silks will give you a serious upper-body workout as well. This also improves flexibility and is ideal for those seeking a low-impact exercise.

pain without sacrificing fitness—not to mention the mental boost.

“It’s great, because I’ve found a supportive, fun, and sometimes outright hilarious group of people to exercise with,” Alexia says.

In her introductory classes, Dawson calls attention to safety, the most important consideration, since participants will spend much of their time twenty feet in the air. Class members provide spotting and encouragement. For a beginner, Dawson provides a boost off the floor and into the silk for an upside-down turn, a maneuver both easy and gratifying. Next, a “crochet” leg wrap enables a swing around the room, another simple but empowering experience. Then, Dawson teaches a foot lock. With a foot stabilized in a knot and the leg locked, the core tightens, the fabric pulls against a hip crease, and voilà! Bending toward the floor and letting go of the hand hold requires a strong and steady core, another thing that takes time to develop. But the students in Dawson’s classes accomplish things they never dreamed possible.

“Aerial is their outlet,” she says. “They see that they are capable of more. Being challenged with fear lowers their anxiety. It’s funny how being twenty feet in the air helps you prioritize what is actually important.”



XplorLife meets at Broken Arrow Ninja Warrior, 11367 East Sixty-First Street in Broken Arrow, and Trion Fight Center, 2205 North Willow Avenue in Broken Arrow. (918) 440-0780 or xplorlife.net.



## DISC JOCKEYS

**I**T'S HIDING IN plain sight in parks all over Oklahoma. What seem like ordinary expanses of green are dotted with contraptions that look like lamp posts made of chains and tires, marking them as courses for a special kind of golfer. This is disc golf, and it's a sport with a huge following, judging by the hundred-plus disc golf courses across the state and the eighty-eight registered clubs in Oklahoma communities large and small.

Disc golf has been around in some form since 1926. It was popularized by "Steady" Ed Headrick, who, while

working for the California-based Wham-O toy company, redesigned the Pluto Platter and named it the Frisbee. Seeing the marketing potential in developing a sport around the toy, Headrick first promoted Frisbee tournaments, then coined and trademarked the term disc golf in the mid-'70s. He also designed disc golf courses around the U.S. Two of his first courses are in central Oklahoma at Northeast Lions Park in Norman and Will Rogers Park in Oklahoma City.

In several obvious ways, disc golf is like golf. A course may have eighteen holes, and there are pars, tees, bogeys, and birdies. Players walk around

outdoors on grassy surfaces with bags containing putters and drivers. But in disc golf, a putter is not a club but a plastic disc with a blunt edge, and a driver is one with a sleek profile and a narrow edge. These and other types of discs are designed for the game's various distances and conditions. According to C.J. Brunner of the Chickasha Disc Golf Club, disc golfers tend to carry a large selection.

"Similar to how a ball golfer would carry a variety of clubs depending on the situation and what he wants the ball to do, disc golfers use different types of discs based on where they want it to land," says Brunner.

With all those discs and a cornucopia of accessories—such as a twelve-foot "disc gator" for retrieving a disc from a body of water or the branches of a tree—a bag is a key piece of gear. Brunner's is a short, wheeled cart with multiple compartments for everything from discs to his disc gator to a rain poncho. Its best feature: a fold-down seat.

Disc golf is also less formal than golf, the attire being considerably less uniform. And the lingo is colorful. "Tree love," for example, occurs when a disc strikes a tree and falls favorably toward the basket. "Tree-nied" is when a disc strikes a tree and bounces off in the wrong direction.

"It means you are being dec-nied the shot you want," Brunner jokes. Silly lingo aside, getting involved is easy. A starter set of discs runs about thirty dollars, and access to disc golf courses usually is free. Disc golf groups are easy to find and often sponsor mini-tournaments with an average entry fee of ten dollars. Proceeds usually go to a good cause, often benefiting local schools and medical research.

Not to mention it's a good reason to go for a walk. According to a study by the Professional Disc Golf Association, each time a person goes out to play an eighteen-hole round of disc golf, they walk an average of three miles.

"Tenkiller State Park near Vian is one of nine Oklahoma state parks with a disc golf course. The sport is reportedly among the fastest growing in the United States, with hundreds of courses being added each year around the world."

"Disc golf has a low cost of entry, an inclusive culture, and a widespread presence, which makes it a great way to spend time outdoors in good company," says Brunner.

For a directory of disc golf clubs and courses across Oklahoma, visit [discgolfscene.com](http://discgolfscene.com). Several state parks have disc golf courses. To learn more, visit [TravelOK.com/parks](http://TravelOK.com/parks).



## FIGHT TO FIT

SOME FITNESS PROGRAMS have more practical application than others. In an encounter with a mugger in a dark parking lot, an epee blade or a Frisbee might not be handy. But some workouts focus on real-life ways to deal effectively with physical threats, and the increased fitness that results is a bonus.

"One little move might save your life," says Sherman Dews, primary instructor for the Tensho Goju school in Lawton.

Tensho Goju is an urban combat survival system combining martial arts and military hand-to-hand combat techniques. Dews has taught the system for several months, with twenty years prior experience teaching taekwon do. The class meets on Saturdays at the Lawton Boys and Girls Club with a welcoming attitude and a mix of adults and youngsters, beginners and veterans.

Tensho Goju focuses on wellness of the mind and spirit as well as the body. Students begin class by reciting a set of virtues before stretching and a thorough warm-up. A choreographed pattern of movement called a kata follows, each student practicing solo, then mirroring the instructor. Soon, students pair off and practice the moves in a self-defense scenario, blocking punches, punching, delivering an elbow to the head with a sweeping motion of the leg and throwing each other to the ground. Other scenarios follow, each class ending with students learning new skills and getting a workout that improves muscle tone, strength, and flexibility. Dews emphasizes that the system can't be learned overnight and encourages regular involvement.

But Tensho Goju is only one way a study of martial arts can lead to greater all-around fitness and wellbeing. A jujitsu instructor for eighteen years, Scott Hewitt has taught Krav Maga at his

**Students learn to defend themselves with a mix of moves while building self-confidence at Titan Krav Maga and Fitness in Norman.**

studio, Titan Martial Arts in Norman, since 2011. Literally meaning "contact-combat" in Hebrew, Krav Maga is a self-defense and fighting system used by the Israeli Army.

"American Krav Maga provides a whole body workout depending on what we do in any particular class," says Hewitt. "It combines aspects of kickboxing, wrestling, and jujitsu."

In a class at Titan, the warm-up is short and practical. On one evening, after tossing a heavy ball back and forth in a circle, sixteen students play an intense sort of martial-arts tag, trying to touch the shoulders of other students while avoiding being touched themselves. Then Hewitt jumps in with skills training, reaching a scenario in which students defend against "attackers" by grabbing them by the hair. The workout then incorporates kicking and punching with the use of protective pads. Eventually, everyone faces off for a grappling session. Student Allen Scates, a former Marine with a lifetime of martial arts experience, has been training with Hewitt for two years. He attends Krav Maga three times a week and uses it for the cardio aspect of his fitness program.

"The practice of Krav Maga is real life," says Scates. "The smallest person can be as effective as a large person with the right skills."

He points to a female student grappling with a young man.

"For instance," he says, "I would not want to walk up on her."

Her name? Brennab Jones. Her goal with Krav Maga? Fitness is only one small part of it. She wants to be able to defend herself.

"I want to be able to cope with what could potentially be the worst day of my life," she says. ■



Tensho Goju classes are \$5 each. (580) 583-8580 or [tenshogoju.com](http://tenshogoju.com). Titan Krav Maga and Fitness classes range from \$79-\$109 per month. 1628 West Lindsey Avenue in Norman. (405) 401-1879 or [titanmaritalarts.com](http://titanmaritalarts.com).

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